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other" mood that scarcely admits of the softening or blurring of facts, does not exclude, and is obviously not intended to exclude, such broadly just and charitable judgment as the reader may feel disposed to accord.

Of the book it may be said finally, that it is one of those publications which without being in method or motive "sensational" may justly cause a sensation. Seldom do such circumstances work upon such a man to produce a work at once so human and so impersonal—a chapter of world history and of private history, refrigerated as it were, by the suppression of personal feeling, and so cold that it burns into the mind as liquid air, seven times colder than ice, burns into the flesh.

THE DAYS BEFORE YESTERDAY. By Lord Frederic Hamilton. New York: George H. Doran Company.

A master of the gentle art of digression—so much a master, indeed, that he seems, as few modern writers are able to seem—to be the victim of it, Lord Frederic Hamilton wanders on in the most charming, aimless fashion through pages of the most delightful reminiscence. In it all, there is nothing of awesome importance: it is just an old man's talk about his youth—but what a picture it paints!

Charm cannot arise out of variety alone nor solely from the mellowness which time gives to the backward view. There must be a social setting, and it is the mid-Victorian setting that lends the charm to Lord Frederic's book. The narrative takes us straight back to the time when no one spoke of a hotel but everyone used the word "inn," now confined to historical novels and jocular references; when young men refrained from smoking before going to a ball, in order to avoid offending their partners; when young people did not spill cigarette ashes over everything; when "the possibility of appearing in Piccadilly in anything but a high hat and a tail coat was unthinkable, as was the idea of sitting down to dinner in anything but a white tie."

In referring to these good old times, the author proves himself, certainly, a very moderate *laudator temporis acti*. Heavy drinking, for example, was more common, he admits, in those days, than now—though it is (curiously enough) to the *cigarette* rather than to superior virtue that the temperate habits of the twentieth century are due! Nor does he in any way bore his readers with comparisons between the old and the new. Nevertheless, he holds a brief for the Victorian period. Granting that the differences between different types of social life are largely sentimental, still sentiments are everything, for they include our ideals. And Victorian ideals are not to be surrendered without loss. "To my mind," writes the author, "they embody all that is clean and sound in the nation. It does not follow that because Victorians revelled in hideous wall-papers and loved ugly furniture, that therefore their points of view were mistaken ones." The reason for emphasizing this attitude of the author's at the expense of failing to point out the many charm-

ing nooks and crannies as well as the wide outlooks of experience to which the narrative leads one, is just that at heart one cannot help agreeing with all this, whether deliberately said or implied. A book like this arouses in one a certain vague nostalgia, a longing for a more settled, better ordered, society, a simpler set of principles than we now have. In order to feel something of this it is perhaps unnecessary to be an Englishman or past seventy years of age. Shameful confession! Many of us in this great new country and in this thrilling twentieth century are at heart Victorian, and we shall revel in this latest Victorian book.

Curious and rich beyond what one may usually expect in reminiscence are the frankly miscellaneous contents. On one page one learns how it was that Cinderella happened to wear a glass slipper, and on another how at Cannes a certain Mme. Goldschmidt sang to the author's youngest brother who was sick of typhoid fever. This Mme. Goldschmidt was, of course, no other than Jenny Lind. There is a chapter descriptive of life in the Midi which rivals in atmosphere any similar study in fiction. There is another chapter dealing with life in Germany—an informal, but vivid and penetrating study of sundry types. What could be more delightful in its way than the conversations among Mr. Over-Inspector of Railroads, Mr. Factory Director Spiegelberg, Mr. Councillor of Commerce, Mr. Ducal Supervisor of Forests, Mr. Town Councillor Balhorn, and the rest, who were laboriously, and successfully, striving to acquire a practical command of English. The narrative takes us to India and to Canada; it sparkles over a great variety of subjects, irrespective of time or place. And all the time it paints a picture which one cannot help enjoying.